

# AN ADDRESS

BY

HON. JOHN L. DAWSON,

BEFORE THE

WASHINGTON AND UNION L. SOCIETIES

OF

WASHINGTON COLLEGE:

DELIVERED

**On Wednesday Evening, June 18th, 1856.**

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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WASHINGTON COLLEGE, June 19th, 1856.

HON. JOHN L. DAWSON: RESPECTED SIR,—We, the undersigned, committees of the Washington and Union L. Societies, tender to you the thanks of the Societies for your able and eloquent address, delivered before them last evening and respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

JOSEPH VANCE,	}	Com. W. L. Society.
HENRY WOODS,		
L. B. FLACK,		
W. B. FARIS,	}	Com. U. L. Society.
JOSEPH HAYS,		
J. H. MARSHALL,		

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WASHINGTON, PA., June 19th, 1856.

GENTLEMEN:—In compliance with the request contained in your joint note of this date, I respectfully furnish you for publication a copy of the address delivered by me last evening before the Washington and Union Literary Societies.

Respectfully yours,

JOHN L. DAWSON.

To JOSEPH VANCE,	}	Com. Wash. L. Society.
HENRY WOODS,		
L. B. FLACK,		
W. B. FARIS,	}	Com. Union L. Society.
JOSEPH HAYS,		
J. H. MARSHALL,		



## A D D R E S S .

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*Members of the Union and Washington Literary Societies,*

*And Ladies and Gentlemen:*

It is with a pleasure which I feel at a loss for fitting terms to express, that I am here this evening, in obedience to the partial summons of your Societies. Forgetful, indeed, must I have proven of those high benefits to which I confess myself beholden,—of the privileges of culture and discipline which I have here enjoyed, could I have failed to respond to that call! But with pleasing facility does the memory glide back to bye-gone days; and visions of all that can charm the fancy or fire the young imagination,—that can give strength and beauty to mental effort,—that can stimulate with generous ambition the heart of youth,—throng unbidden upon me as I stand here in your presence, and remind me of the source of whatever I have attained of success,—of many of the most agreeable enjoyments of my life;—and of the obligations, which, as an Alumnus of your flourishing Institution, I am under to cherish her fair fame. My mind is thus carried back to the days of my college life with feelings of tender regret, to the warm-hearted and aspiring companions of my boyhood, some of whom have since climbed to honorable distinction, others are still struggling in the active and rushing currents of life, and many of whom, alas! have been gathered to the grave. I think of the earnest task and the eager sport;—of the warm rivalry for literary honors;—of the preparation, the trial, and the triumph. The landscape and the beautiful village on which my eyes fell this morning, as I gazed from the portico of this classic edifice, are all familiar to me, from old and cherished acquaintance. Amid the rural beauties of yon pleasant hills and valleys, I have loitered, and walked, and run, and rode. I feel as if after a long absence, I were but revisiting my home. Of the estimable gentlemen, distinguished by scholarship, whose instructions, as Professors, I here enjoyed, I see now but a single one before me; and the then venerated President of your Institution,—the learned, the just, the generous and truly eloquent McConaughey, has passed beyond that “bourne,” whence

no "traveller returns." Thus much as a passing and feeble tribute, I feel the occasion demands of me to speak, and in so doing, I experience a vivid impression of the truth of the poet's language,

"Dear the schoolboy spot  
We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot."

The stirring period of the world in which we live, would indeed furnish theme enough for consideration in many interesting aspects, sufficient to carry me far beyond the limits to which the occasion restricts me. I propose to glance briefly at some only of the most striking facts in the progress of humanity, as held up to memory in the mirror of the past, and which, though passed in hurried review, I would might yet produce impressions and awaken impulses, my young friends, which should be felt by you for good, when you come to be men struggling in earnest conflict with the trials of life! Some notice of the political and moral phenomena exhibited by the nations of other times and other lands;—the proper end of all political organizations, as evolved from the wrecks of former states, and from the history of our own career from the condition of feeble settlements to the solid basis and admirable symmetry of our existing system, as well as of the dangers which may threaten it;—the present state of the world in reference to science, to literature, to morals, to religion:—these will afford, for a brief season, the subject of our desultory notice, and will assist us in determining wherein consists the progress which has been attained, and what it is which the world will shortly expect of you. We may thus be able to infer with assurance what are your relations with the times in which you live; and what are the paramount duties which your membership of the most flourishing of political communities,—the noblest and most worthy of the patriotic devotion of a freeman,—imposes upon you. What can you do now while still within the walls of *Alma Mater*? and what hereafter, when the pursuits of life shall claim you for their special departments? When we seek to mount to the dawn of history, and to trace, in the succession of events, the struggles of man to improve his condition, our vision is startled and confounded by the number and greatness of the recorded changes of which he has been the subject. Revolution treads upon the heels of revolution, as rapidly and with as dazzling effect to the perception, as the capricious combinations of the kaleidoscope. Left soon after his creation upon this planet, to the light of his own reason,—holding all his corporeal comfort, his felicity of mind, and his advancement towards the perfect happiness of which he is susceptible, upon the tenure of the exertion of his mental and physical faculties,—the melancholy picture of his experience which history presents, is that of a giant groping in some gloomy cavern, at one time dashing himself against rocks, at another falling over some

horrid precipice or into some deep abyss, seeking in vain the light which shall show him his true situation and circumstances, and how he may proceed with safety, so as to reach that world above ground, where all is clear sunshine. The torch-lights which he manages to raise occasionally, cast so limited and partial a glare, that the effect is only to lead him from one error into another. Those who meet him with kind words and proffers of assistance, are often but blind leaders of the blind, and if a real benefactor appears, he is rejected as an enemy, and his counsels of wisdom disregarded. Such seems the inscrutable mystery of our condition as denizens of this lower world; and such, in its first aspect, is the discouraging view presented by history, of the human race.

As a creature of imagination and passion, as well as of sense, and of intellect, man is seen at one time under the effects of selfish gratification, a laughing child of folly, or under those of disappointment, a demon of hell,—often the sport of caprice,—rarely the subject of enlightened reason. This original helplessness of the human condition, is seen in all man's earliest attempts at knowledge, in whatever department. His ideas of a Supreme Being soon become the embodiment or reflex of his own untutored and erring reason, or of his debased passions. His Deities are the creatures of his own brain,—members of the animal or vegetable creation, possessing some destructive power, or the source of some imagined benefit,—the sun, the moon, or the stars,—a leek, an ibis, or a crocodile,—or that more refined and imaginative idolatry which constituted in part the religious system of the Egyptians, and still more, of the Greeks and Romans.

Thus it is that the progress of man has been exceedingly slow,—slow in knowledge, in the enlargement of his capacities, in the proper apprehension of his personal dignity,—in the gaining a mastery over the dominion of nature. In no particular are his weaknesses more apparent than in his efforts towards self-government. The Patriarchal authority, which was that originally established by nature, is seen to pass by easy abuse into tyranny; and the polity which acknowledges but a single and unlimited head,—varying through the phases of Indian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman dominion,—continued to afflict the earth till the christian era. The ancient Republics scarcely form an exception to the general remark, founded as they were, upon arbitrary distinctions and principles of inequality. A similar variation of the government of one or of a few, has prevailed through many succeeding centuries, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil, till the times in which we live. The twelve Cæsars reigned and passed away. Charlemagne, Alfred, and Haroun al Raschid swayed their beneficent sceptres;—then came the Capetian race of the Gallic monarchs, boasting as its chief worthies a Henry IV and a Louis XIV;—



then arose the House of Hapsburgh with its Spanish and Neapolitan ramifications;—William of Normandy and the glories of the Saxon line in England;—and at length, in the fulness of these latter times, the overshadowing empire of the Czar. It is under the auspices of these Royal Houses that the modern world has been made what it is. It is under monarchs of one or another of these lines, that while numberless hosts of men have been marshalled in sanguinary conflict and sent untimely to the shades, new worlds have been opened to human enterprise, civilization has been extended, and the social condition of the race has received permanent amelioration.

To change the view for a moment, and to regard history in another aspect, there is scarcely anything more remarkable than those great impulses, which at different times, have operated upon the minds of men,—absorbing while they lasted, all the energies of those different European nations, whose actions it has been the province of history to record. Every age has thus had its characteristic. Thus the three centuries immediately succeeding the birth of Christ, were distinguished by the contests of Christianity with Paganism. From Constantine, for several centuries, followed the invasions of the Roman dominions by the Scandinavian hordes on the North, and the Saracens on the South. The Feudal system, introduced by the Northern conquerors, was the foundation of chivalry, and, when those nations became settled and converted to christianity, prepared them for the *crusades*,—events of mighty energy and awakening power, and great potency in results. The next great movement of the human mind manifested itself in the revival of learning, which, beginning in the reigns of Alfred and Charlemagne, shone out in full lustre in the 14th century, and the age of the Medici. Immediately upon this followed the Reformation, and shortly afterwards came the age of discovery. Thence we pass to the Revolution of 1688 and the present times,—the age of enlightened liberty, of progress in physical science, and of general illumination.

What of benefit or utility appears in those great movements, was generally met at first by the people to be most affected by them, not only with indifference, but with positive aversion. The Divine Founder of Christianity,—the great source of the superiority of modern society,—was himself compelled to undergo the death of a felon. Long and bitter was the struggle, before his sublime and beneficent religion succeeded in supplanting the gross absurdities and superstitions of polytheism. Guttemburgh and Faust, the inventors of printing, were persecuted from one hiding place to another, and constantly menaced with assassination for supposed collusion with the devil;—so miraculous appeared the multiplication of books by means of movable types. Christopher Columbus was hardly able to procure for himself, for a few days,—till he should



show the Indies to Europe, and add another continent to the map of the world,—exemption from the cruel fate to which his followers, in their impatience, had condemned him. Arkwright was impeded in his inventive efforts by the popular prejudice against machinery, and by commercial jealousy; yet he lived to hear the acknowledgment that England was indebted to him for the most flourishing of her national manufactures, and to receive the honor of knighthood. A strong want of faith in the promises of projectors has generally characterized the human mind, and even the inventions of Fulton and Morse were greeted with ridicule, and won their way but slowly. Thus it is that man has been instructed and benefited in spite of himself. What he at times resisted as the most obnoxious evils, have in the result proved blessings the most positive and distinguished. It is thus, that according to the just observation of Bancroft, every age improves on the preceding, though it is to be observed that progress often treads in the footsteps of violence. Particular countries, and eras, and individuals have been made to suffer, that the race at large might receive the benefit. It is thus that ‘History has become philosophy teaching by example.’

The facts of human advancement in the particular matter of Government, are analogous to those which I have already noticed in its other relations. It seemed indeed, as the result of ancient experiments, that mankind were destined to the perpetual condition of servile dependence, in some form or other of an oligarchy. The ancient republics, founded as they were upon arbitrary distinctions and principles of inequality, proved but faltering and feeble attempts at self-government; and at the birth of Christ all the democratic states of antiquity had become absorbed in the Roman, in which the spirit of freedom had just expired at the feet of Augustus Cæsar. It is, however, obvious to remark that the prevalent notions of the ancient world upon philosophy and religion, deeply interwoven as they were with a baseless and hollow superstition, furnished no solid substratum on which a system of self-government could be expected long to repose. If, in addition to this, we contemplate the long period since the Christian era, during which the benign principles of Christianity were perverted by rulers and by priests for their mutual aggrandizement,—the long period and the bloody convulsions, through which the human mind struggled before it attained to a just sense of its dignity, and came to wise conclusions upon the subject of Government, we shall perhaps admit that the experiment of a Commonwealth under Cromwell was a misnomer, and that the Batavian and French Republics were made under circumstances and conditions,—without a thorough adoption of the representative system, or with monarchial and despotic countries surrounding them,—the most unfavorable for success. It may be said they were unnatural efforts, and that indeed it

is only at the close of the last century, and in this country, that man became educated up to the point when he was fitted for an enlightened system of self-government. The sparseness of the population, at the foundation of the colonies, gave an early sense of personal importance to every member of these new communities. Then again the mighty extent of the continent, the great chains of lofty mountains, the majestic lakes and magnificent rivers of America, could exert no other influence upon the minds of its inhabitants, constantly solicited to their contemplation by the incidents of life in a new country,—than to expand them to a corresponding magnitude. The seeds of liberty and independence were therefore sown in the circumstances of our origin and settlement; and free institutions have been the natural growth of America.

But to proceed with a somewhat wider glance at the distinguishing circumstances of our age and country, perhaps you will hardly think there is any thing in all history more full of lively and instructive interest than the greatness and rapidity of the changes which have taken place in the world since the twenty-five years preceding the present century. These changes have been great and all pervading,—relating not only to our knowledge of the earth's surface, its interior structure, and ultimate elements, as shown by the rise of the sciences of geology and chemistry, and kindred branches, and the advancement of the useful arts; but to the organization of governments, to the political conditions of states, to the progress of legal reforms, to the manners of the people, and to social opinions, literary, religious, and political.

At the foundation of this Institution in 1806, the population of the States consisted of less than six millions, and the Union itself numbered but seventeen states. The great valley of the Ohio and Mississippi was then without inhabitants, save the wild Indian, and here and there a solitary hunter, whom no perils could intimidate; except the few incipient villages immediately upon the banks of the more considerable rivers, the whole vast country was a waste. What are now the great cities of that valley, were then known only as military posts on the outskirts of civilization. Commerce was still carried on by the ark, the barge, and the pirogue. This was among the first Colleges established west of the mountains, and the number throughout the Union was but thirty-two. There are now eight territories, with a confederacy of thirty-one states and thirty millions of people. When the venerated Brown and Wiley first assumed their duties as Presiding officers here,—when Professors Russel and McKennan imparted their valuable instructions in languages and belles lettres, and James Reed trained the young mind in mathematics and the exact sciences,—the great invention of the steamboat was yet struggling towards perfection in structure, convenience, and speed. Railroads were yet undreamed of; and Morse had not subjected the

most subtle of nature's elements to be the vehicle of man's thoughts. It was then thought a great achievement in steam navigation, when Capt. Shreve accomplished the distance from New Orleans to Louisville in one month. The hum, and bustle, and activity of commercial and manufacturing industry, such as now exist in the two great centres of our Commonwealth, were not yet awakened. The agricultural interest was almost the only one distinct from the professional. The common school system was not yet established south of New England. In those days the reverence for intellect and eminent forensic talent was great, much greater than at present. It may be said that it was because the instances of great success were more rare; but perhaps there are few upon the present stage, who retain any recollection of the judicial and forensic efforts of Addison, of Baldwin, of Ross, Campbell, Breckenridge, Kennedy, and Doddridge, who will admit that there have been many instances of approach to them among the men of later days. Doubtless this was owing in part to the fact that all was yet new in this country. The common law was to be administered and settled in accordance with the new circumstances of our condition. But there was another cause in the superior education of the Professors of the law, superadded to their high accomplishments and personal character. If education was less diffused, it was yet more thorough and according to a higher standard. What the stream lacked in breadth and evenness of flow, it more than made up in depth and power of current.

One of the particulars in which the present is distinguished from all past eras, is the success with which physical investigations have been prosecuted, as illustrated by the progress of manufactures and the arts and the diffusion of commerce. At the base of the mighty impulse in these departments, is the Steam Engine. The myriads of applications of that mighty, yet tractable power, have transformed society, and language can hardly over-color, in depicting the achievements of the steam boat, the locomotive and railway, and the ocean steamer. Only less important than the wonders of steam, are those of electricity as applied for telegraphic communication. By this mysterious agent, when as fully extended and ramified as the present age will witness it, the mind not only of a whole nation, but of the entire world, will be concentrated simultaneously upon a single subject,—a dispatch far surpassing that of Mercury and Iris, the fabled messengers of Olympus. As results of recent improvements in chemical processes, the images formed by the subtle rays of light in the camera obscura, have been made to fix themselves in pictures of permanent beauty, and by the aid of a superior analysis, the metallic basis of an alkali has been obtained in solid substance, of great beauty, and of an applicability and cheapness almost equal to that of iron. Who shall say that the ideas of the Alchemists

were but dreams, and that gold itself shall not yet be shown to be the combination of simpler elements! By science, coupled with mechanical skill, iron has been taught a ductility which fits it for structures of almost every description, and lightness combined with strength forms a new feature in modern edifices, while bridges of an elegant beauty, before unknown, yet with a firmness scarce inferior to the Roman, are spanning the broad rivers of our continent. Mountains interpose but feeble barriers to the daring genius of man, and the ponderous train rushes along its iron pathway with resistless energy for thousands of feet underground. While the structure and rig of sailing vessels has brought them to a closer approximation to steam, the genius of our countryman Maury, by the wind and current charts, which are the result of long and multiplied observation and careful deduction, is materially shortening their track over the Ocean. The power of mathematical analysis and calculation, as attained in our day, is seen in the designation by Le Verrier of the place of a new planet unseen as yet by mortal eyes; while the mammoth telescope of Herschel gives sublime confirmation of the prediction. This and the still greater instrument of Lord Ross have extended our knowledge of the nebular portion of the universe. The telescope of Ross has proven the moon to be without inhabitants, while the numerous glasses which sweep the sky, from observatories in every portion of christendom, are still adding to the number of asteroids which form a portion of our planetary system and extending our meteorological lore. All these are the fair fruits of that inductive or experimental system of philosophizing which was inaugurated by Lord Bacon, and which, followed up with such brilliant results at the close of the last century by the philosophers of the continent, has ripened in this age, and in great part in our own country, into a fruitage of unprecedented richness and exuberance.

The diffusion and growth of commerce within the present century has not been less remarkable. Only a quarter of a century ago, the intercourse between this country and Europe, was by sailing vessels, and was attended by the evils of tardiness and irregularity, and was of comparatively limited results. At this time, almost every considerable portion of the earth which affords a material for commerce, is tied to the other by lines of swift and commodious steamers, defying alike the wind and the wave, and bearing with admirable despatch and regularity and safety, their teeming cargoes of the rare and valuable products of distant lands, or those of agriculture and the arts, with multitudes of intelligent and stirring adventurers, intent on spreading civilization to every portion of the earth's habitable surface. It is within the brief period which I have mentioned, that the Cunard and Collins lines have commenced their voyages between New York and Liverpool and Southampton; that steam communication has been established between England,



through the Mediteranean to Egypt, and through the Red Sea and the Arabian to India; that a line of ocean steamers plies between London and Australia, and from Panama to Valparaiso, and that two lines of steamers pass weekly to and fro, from New York to the Isthmus, and from the Isthmus to San Francisco. Within that time the great commercial port of Bremen has also been constantly extending, and bringing to a regular and quicker communication, the connections of her vast shipping with South America, California, and Australia. No part of the world has been left unexplored, and even in the hitherto deemed impenetrable regions of frost, our countryman Kane has found a stretch of three thousand miles of open sea, whose waves tossed by the violence of the elements forever break against shores of perpetual ice.

It cannot be doubted that these results are eminently conducive to the happiness of man. What indeed was the condition of the refined nations of antiquity, in comparison with that of the moderns in the single respect of physical comforts! True the principal personages enjoyed what was then regarded as luxury; but in many respects, how mean and sorry would appear the splendor of Kings compared with what many a private citizen is able to enjoy in these days without bestowing a thought upon the high progress in civilization of which it is the index. Where was then the universal diffusion of silk and cotton fabrics which now furnish so large a portion of the clothing of the human family? Even as late as Queen Elizabeth silk stockings for ladies first came into use, those previously worn having been of woollen cloth, cut to the shape, and sewed together; and the extensive production and consumption of our great southern staple, was a consequence of the spinning jenny of Hargraves, the spinning-frame of Arkwright, and the cotton-gin of Whitney,—all invented since the middle of the last century. Glass, though in some degree known in the time of our Saviour, was yet of great rudeness in comparison with the resplendent crystal productions of our day, which are in general domestic use, and for ornamental purposes. The potato and Indian corn were first introduced to the knowledge of Europeans with the discovery of America, as well as the luxury of tobacco; coffee and tea have come into general use only since the Cape of Good Hope was doubled by the Portuguese; and sugar extracted from cane has been in general use less than two centuries and a half. Superior physical development may have been the consequence of the ancient simplicity of life and manners; but privation and destitution were probably quite as great in proportion to numbers.

What were the means of knowledge enjoyed by antiquity, in comparison with those at our command? Teaching was oral in the schools of the philosophers, and their knowledge of the world being so restricted, their basis for generalizing was extremely narrow. Then their mechan-

ical helps were few and insignificant. A Swammerdain and Lewenhoeck had not yet opened up, by microscopic research, that wondrous world of organic life, invisible to the naked eye; nor had Galileo, by the invention of the telescope, and its direction to the heavens, demonstrated the falseness of the Ptolemaic theory of our planetary system, which recognized the earth as the centre, and established the truth of that of Copernicus, which all succeeding observations have confirmed. No wonder that the ancient philosophers, when they left the domain of geometry and pure mathematics, became such dreamers. Nor was paper yet invented. The Egyptian papyrus, or waxen tablets and the stylus, formed the means of recording events, and the mighty lever of the press had not yet appeared, to move with its mute eloquence the popular mind. The acuteness of the Grecian intellect indeed, shone conspicuous in the domain of philosophy and ethics; and in his special department, the scholastic world will scarcely allow that there has risen a superior to Aristotle. In the Fine Arts of Sculpture and Architecture, they also produced models which still constitute the canons of criticism. In painting and music, the moderns have gone immeasurably beyond them. It is, however, in the arts of expression, oral and written, that the refined nations of antiquity attained an excellence, which, if reached at all in succeeding ages of the world, has perhaps never been surpassed. The writers of those days had the advantage of finding before them a field unoccupied, and hence the superior freshness, simplicity, and strength of their style,—enlivened as far as a just taste will allow, with imagery, and polished by the severe use of the file, to the highest degree of finish. The best models of taste are still the authors which you read here. The works of Homer, Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, Cicero, Livy, Horace, and Virgil, are great masterpieces of art, apart from the information they contain,—apart from their uses as a logical discipline of the mental powers, and from that knowledge of your own language which can be best acquired by the study of a foreign one. They are studies which will not fail to reward the student in proportion to his attention to them, and yet I would not have you dwell forever in the pedantries of dead tongues.

I have noticed the tendency of the modern spirit, and especially that of the present age, to dominion over the world of matter,—the subjecting of all the powers of nature to the comfort and felicity of man, chiefly in relation to his physical nature. This strong tendency is undeniable, as the result of the spirit of invention which is abridging and improving every process in the arts. I now allude to it as one of the tendencies of the times which is apt to pass to an injurious extreme. The effect is to draw off the attention from the interior world of mind and of morals,—to unspiritualize our existence, and make us creatures of mere matter,—springing from matter,—our whole lives passed in devotion to material



interests,—and perishing at last with few ideas of the exalted origin, nature, and destiny of the human mind. I say this high character of humanity must not be permitted to be sunk. You must not lose sight of it in the hurry and bustle of life. You must seek ever to sustain the cause of sound literature, which is the source of the perpetual renewal of those ideas of dignity and of beauty, which impart the true charm to existence, and without which the treasures of the globe are paltry and insignificant.

I have referred to the greatness and extent of changes in the world in general, within the period of modern history. These changes have been great and striking on this continent especially. When the cavaliers commenced their settlement at Jamestown, and the Puritans at Plymouth, how numerous and powerful were the aboriginal tribes which overspread this country! It is mentioned by Drake, in his Indian historical collections, that no less than two hundred distinct tribes occupied America two centuries ago. It is true exterminating wars have done much, and the vicious contact with the whites has done more, to diminish their numbers. Within the memory of the generation which just preceded our own, and which has not yet passed away, these hills were vocal with the shouts of these free sons of nature. Their noble forms passed swiftly athwart the landscape, as they urged the chase with the grace and agility of an Apollo, or strode with quiet pace through forests of kindred majesty. The canoe glanced lightly over the waters of our beautiful rivers, the hand of the Indian maiden directing its course, and the merry voice of childhood was heard from groups of artless children, where in the covert of pleasant shade the smoke of the wigwam ascended. Old and young there loitered in peaceful and happy repose. All this I have said was almost within the memory of the present generation; and yet, of the myriads then within the limits of the States, only a few thousands are now left on this side of the Father of waters. The fact is appalling! And how long will the remainder endure in the great valley of the Missouri and beyond the Rocky Mountains. To prophesy from the past, and from the experience of the world that barbarism must give way to civilization, the poor Indian, before another century shall have passed away, will have met the doom of his race in the very spot where, by the received theory of the Ethnologists, it first touched upon our shores.

But the changes which I have noticed in physical science, and consequent social amelioration in the modern world in general, are not more remarkable than those which have occurred in its political relations. At the same time that our own territory and population have increased to such an extent, all parts of the world are brought into unrestricted and intimate intercourse, and individual nations are still striving to extend their power, as if universal dominion were not an exploded phan-

tom. Of the three leading nations of Europe, recently engaged to settle the balance of power in that part of the globe, two, France and Russia, are practical despotisms. The third is our own mother land. The excellence of the English constitution and national character are known to every one within the reach of my voice. That excellence, during the slow evolution of a thousand years, has raised her to the first rank among the nations. The greatness and extent of her power has been a blessing to the world,—everywhere that it has reached, carrying a preponderance of benefits, social, civil, and commercial. She is allied to us still, notwithstanding our differences on points of passing interest, by the indestructible ties of blood, language and literature. The alliance of the Western Powers, to which she has but recently formed a party, has at length terminated without important results; and the time may not be very remote when her free institutions shall become obnoxious to the upholders of absolute government, and she shall be driven to solicit protection against their combined assaults, from the giant offspring of her blood on this side of the water. America, as the freer State, has hitherto held to England a relation, similar to that which England holds to the other states of Europe; but in a contest, such as that to which I have adverted, the Old England and the Young America would make common cause. In the nobleness of such a cause, the free and adventurous spirits of America would embark with that ardour, and energy, and fertility of resources, which are acknowledged as national characteristics, and which would insure success; and the cause of enlightened liberty would once more witness a signal triumph.

It may be that England, as the result of such a contest, will quietly lay aside the trappings of a hereditary aristocracy, and come under institutions similar to our own. If so, it will be well, and who shall then be able to predict the glorious results to our race, when the two leading nations of the world shall combine for the diffusion of the principles of republican equality! Then at length America shall enjoy the last and highest honor in reserve for her,—that of regenerating the exhausted systems of the Old World. This done, and under the operation of institutions in harmony with man's nature, the sciences, the arts, and everything which can elevate and adorn humanity, will run a new career of glory, such as the world has never yet witnessed.

With the great names which, in every department of human progress, have illustrated her annals, we are all familiar from childhood. Her warriors, her poets, her statesmen, her philosophers, are known to us almost in the same breath with our own. When you read the elegant pages of the Sketch Book, and other charming productions of the pen of Irving, your minds involuntarily seek a comparison in Addison and the classic writers of the reign of Queen Anne. The philosophic yet clo-

quent stories of Bancroft and Prescott, find a parallel in the History of the House of Stuart, by the subtle and perspicuous Hume, and the Decline and Fall, by the acute and glowing Gibbon. When the orators of our country are in our minds, and the name of Henry is upon our lips, we are apt to call him the *Chatham* of America, resembling him in power of logic, in the directness of his arguments, in his strong and nervous language, and in command of the passions. A parallel equally striking presents itself between the characters, as orators, of Webster and Burke,—both distinguished by profound knowledge of the history of the English Constitution and liberty, and animated with its spirit, and both filled with the grand results of political wisdom;—of Clay and Pitt,—alike men of expedients in policy, and equally distinguished for the astonishing efforts of intellect and eloquence which they brought to the support of their favorite systems;—and of Calhoun and Brougham,—the one as well as the other, characterized by intenseness of mental power, and the sententious and striking diction in which their nervous ideas found expression. As expounders of the Common Law, our hereditary birth-right, there is also striking resemblance in grasp and acuteness of intellect, in deep and varied learning, and cogency and clearness of expression, between those illustrious ornaments of the Judiciary, Chief Justice Marshall and Lord Mansfield; while in the purity of character, indomitable firmness, and energetic discipline of the English Wellington, we recognize the leading military traits of that peerless hero, whose name your institution is privileged to bear, and whose memory the world will forever delight to honor.

Though the people of these states may be regarded chiefly as an offshoot of the English stock, it is plain that the day is not far distant when it shall become more thrifty than the parent tree. You know the story of our advancement from feebleness and insignificance to our present high position among the powers of the earth. We have the most admirable system of polity which has yet been presented to the admiration of mankind. We are all justly proud of that system; and yet it deeply concerns us in view of the great mission we have thus to fulfil, to consider well the guarantees which we have for its permanence. I know we are accustomed to seek those guarantees in the superiority of the present age in knowledge, in every department, to those which have preceded it,—to that flood of light, especially, which in the century preceding the present time, has been poured upon the subject of human rights and government, in the deep and subtle discussions which they received, as they passed through the fires of Revolution. It will be thought, too, that this security will be doubled by the active spirit of inquiry, and by the freedom of intercommunication, the unrestricted intercourse between all parts of the world, and the untrammelled utterings of the Press, which are glorious distinc-

tions of the present era. The very life of the world has become, in its tendencies, and almost in its realities, the exhibition of freedom on the grandest scale. Public opinion is everywhere, and inevitably, tending to freedom. A knowledge of the rights of the individual, and a sense of his importance cannot but be the result of the hurrying to and fro of the nations, and their meeting and mingling in friendly intercourse in the great marts of mankind. All this is familiar reflection, and doubtless there is much justice in its conclusions. I cannot, however, leave this topic without reverting, for a moment, to one prominent circumstance in our history. Who can have failed to note, in the consideration of this subject, how far above the petty sectional and party questions of the day, stand the purposes and motives in which originated this Union. Did not the same sectional causes of difference exist then, as now? How did the men of '76 and '89 deal with them? Did they consider them of such paramount importance as to outweigh the Union?—you know that on the contrary, no other question was regarded as of any importance, except as secondary to its preservation. How comes it, my young friends, that the Union is now held so cheap!—that we seem intent on stretching every cord that holds it together, as if to test how much they will bear without snapping! Is it not because, elated with prosperity, our minds are diverted from the illustrious examples of our conscript Fathers. Let us turn once more to those unfailing oracles. Let us not forget the greatness of the trust reposed in us! Let us remember that the *permanency* of the Union is the experiment which we are making! Let us be sensible of the superior importance, above all other questions and considerations, of preserving its integrity! The peculiar institutions of a portion of the country, are evils of a subordinate degree, and no pretensions to statesmanship can be admitted which do not embrace this as the primary element. Time, interest and advancing civilization will carry that peculiar race into the distant South, preparatory to their return to their original home, just as certainly as the waters of the Mississippi are drained into the Gulf. It is impossible in the nature of things that two distinct races can for any great period co-exist on this continent. With the landing of the Pilgrims, and the earliest settlement on the James River, began the gradual disappearance of the Indian; and as settlement and civilization advanced, his track has been from his native hunting grounds towards the setting sun. In the excess of their prosperity, both New England and the South, are prone to undervalue the Union, and to suppose they should flourish as well without it. They are committing a great and lamentable mistake. They would be shorn of their consideration among the nations of the world, and their power too would consequently be gone. Let them decide whether the insignificant evils under which they now complain, are at all comparable to



those which they should then be called upon to endure. If they cannot now adjust their sectional differences within the Union, what probability is there that they will have better success, when split into a dozen petty states, where the causes of disunion will be multiplied indefinitely, from the exclusiveness of local systems, and the absence of a common tie.

It depends, I believe, above all other things, under Providence, upon the education or training which is given to the young, how long shall be the duration of this grand and beautiful fabric. I allude not so much to the mere training of the school or recitation room, though this is a great and essential portion, but to that larger and still more useful education which is conducted at home, and in society. It is all important that the young mind should be secured from the contagion of evil example. Juvenal's admonition is as pertinent now as when first uttered. It is all important that it should learn a docile submission to wholesome discipline. That it should be accustomed from the earliest years to contemplate the best examples of excellence;—that it should thus be brought to the comprehension of the social and relative duties;—to the understanding of justice and a love of its exercise;—and to feel deep reverence for law. This, with proper instruction in the history, the foundation, and practical working of our government, and with such accomplishments of speech and of writing as shall enable you best to explain and to defend the truth, would seem to form the best preparation for the future citizen.

With this training and with the knowledge which it is permitted you to acquire within these walls, you may emerge into the world and aspire, with well founded hope, to the high places of society, and a full share of the honors and prizes of life.

My young friends! there are a few elements of character, without the possession of which, no one can become successful or eminently great. These are truth, knowledge, decision, and perseverance. With these qualities failure is impossible, whether as regards individual prosperity, or the discharge of those grave and responsible duties which, as freemen and the descendants of freemen, it is incumbent upon you to meet.

I would enjoin upon you to study well the signs and tendencies of the times. It is of importance to ascertain, if possible, what is the mission of our age and country, and what is our individual part in the promotion of that mission. It cannot fail to strike us that this is a highly practical age, and that every thing is valued with reference to its immediate applicability to the demands of society. It is, however, not to be forgotten, that the great superiority of the times in which we live to those which have gone before, in these various aspects in which

we have traced it, is because the study of principles has been prosecuted more widely, and with deeper research. Nor let it be supposed that the field is by any means exhausted. While the business of society may be expected to consist chiefly in the application of that which is already known; yet it is also to be remembered that some of the greatest discoveries and inventions are those of very recent date. While therefore the triumphs of modern genius must be gathered from the extension to new theatres of that which is known and approved, still new achievements will reward the studies and toils of the persevering; and some of them, now in embryo, will, when promulgated, revolutionize the habits of society. But on those tracks, on which the various pursuits of the world are now moving, how great is the demand for educated skill! What numbers of learned and able men are still needed to rescue the learned professions from the opprobrium of quackery, chicanery, and cant! and what numbers by those constructions, involving the principles of science, which are necessary for the easy intercourse of all parts of this continent,—with trans-oceanic lands and the isles of the sea! These constructions are to go hand in hand with our commerce, in advance of our institutions, to the now untenanted wastes of the new world, North and South, and wherever these institutions obtain a footing, they will work their way. Wherever they move, their civilizing effects will be seen in that wonderful elevation of the masses of our fellow beings, which forms the most glorious and happy distinction of this Federal Union.

The time has gone by, perhaps forever, for the erection of those great structures, whose ruins have come down to us from antiquity, sad monuments of the waste of human effort. We shall no more build Pyramids, and Hanging Gardens, nor rear again those glories minsters and cathedrals, which it required the unintermitted labours of centuries to complete. We shall be sparing henceforth in the erection of columns and triumphal arches. Yet will the demands of our republican institutions, of science, and of religion call into being architectural structures which shall rival those of the Parthenon and the temple of Theseus, and many a city, of little less splendour than Thebes and Babylon, will yet on this continent lift its proud turrets to heaven. Vast is the field yet open, for the exercise of art in its higher departments, and the grand events of our history are yet to find expression in the forms and groupings of sculpture, and be made to live again in the happy creations of the pencil. Our national peculiarities, and social characteristics and manners, are also, with each generation of our progress, still to find embodiment in a living literature.

When, to your ardent imaginations, I suggest all these as proper subjects for your labours, and mention in addition, that great task,



which we have yet to accomplish, of regenerating by the infusion of democratic ideas and sentiments,—not as revolutionary propagandists, but by the silent, yet all powerful force of a great example,—the effete and exhausted governments of Europe, can it be said that the present time lacks inducements to aspiration and effort! On the contrary, your reflections will probably bring you to a concurrence with me in the conviction, that those inducements were never so great, so numerous, so noble. The prizes which they hold out may be harder to gain, but they are greater still in proportion to the labour of attainment. You are now here, young gentlemen, to make your preparation for that labour, within the hallowed precincts of the temple of science. Her resplendent portals are flung widely open. Most of you have already crossed the vestibule, and are quietly threading her aisles, or lingering in her recesses. Let me enjoin you to tread there with a firm step and a determined purpose, and, ere you take your departure, to seize those talismans which I have just pressed on your attention,—truth, knowledge, decision, and perseverance. As the light of the morning sun is necessary to the daily toils of mortals, so these high qualities alone can conduct you successfully up the steep acclivities of a useful life and an honorable fame.

